

*Brotherhood.*

*The Message*  
OF THE  
*Coming Religion.*

THE GOSPEL OF  
FELLOWSHIP AND BEAUTY.

BY

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## The Message of the Coming Religion.

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**I**T is surely an axiom to-day that we live in a state of unrest. There is scarcely a newspaper in any part of the world which does not point to a spirit of unrest in practically every department of life. We are complaining. We complain against the cost of living ; we complain against the abolition of the old land-marks of our social order ; we complain of the tyranny of great powers over small powers ; we complain of the tyranny of orthodoxy—from all sides there is complaint. Perhaps our complaints just now are greatest against the mismanagement of the political affairs of the world by those who have the control of the world. We turn our eyes sometimes to London or to Washington or to Geneva ; but generally at the end of our gaze there is a sort of apathy or distrust in anything coming out of the councils of the nations that is better than what has been. Our tendency generally is to blame the politician, whereas on the other hand if we talk with the politicians about the nations we find that they condemn the people for their selfishness, their lack of idealism and their continual disinclination to follow a lead given to them.

So serious is the state of things to-day that the rich complain against the poor's wastefulness, whereas the poor complain against the luxury of the rich. On all sides there is mutual destructive criticism. I know that many of these complaints are nothing new. The world always did complain, and there is a type of individual who sees always more of the discouraging elements in life than of the hopeful. But that which does characterise our age is the universality of these complaints. It is because of this universal unrest that the world in some ways is more significant to-day than one or two generations ago, for it looks as if now we had all entered into a morass, and we hardly know in

what way we shall be led out of it all. We believe on general principles that human nature has something good at the back of it. We believe that we shall come out of the morass once again on to firm ground, but how long will the process take? That is where not even the most able statesman can in any way tell us how we shall find some sure basis for the future. Ask the statesmen of Europe about the reconstruction of Europe, and it is an answer of discouragement that they will give you. Ask your own statesmen in any country about your own local problems, and you will not find, so many of you who are really deep thinkers, that they can give you any promise of a golden age within your lifetime or in the lifetime of your children.

On the whole we are face to face with a very big situation in the world. We have had war; and some of us said, believing it, that it was a war to end war. On the whole, as matters are now, we see as many possibilities of war in the future as any situation before 1914 could show us. We thought that after the war was over there would be a greater co-operation between the various elements of the body politic, but as things are to-day an unbrotherly and unco-operative spirit is as rife as it ever was.

On the whole, then, things do not seem very encouraging or hopeful to those few who care to look into the problem of life. I know that most people are content to go their own way, are often so overwhelmed by their own personal difficulties that the general situation of humanity has practically no reality to them. They are not able to focus their gaze, to see any kind of human tragedy in the world at large. But there are a certain number, certainly a few, who are able to visualise the world problem. Indeed, you would not be here in this hall but for having to some extent visualised that there is an important, nay a vital problem in the world greater than the problem of your own life.

### **Two Golden Threads—Fellowship and Beauty.**

□ To most of us who so visualise, on the whole the elements of discouragement predominate over anything encouraging. But the picture is not altogether



one of despair, because in this texture of gloom which is being woven round us there is a golden thread—I might say that there are two golden threads which are swiftly to be found weaving themselves into the texture of the future. Now these two are respectively the increasing spirit of fellowship which is spreading in the world, and the spirit of beauty which is becoming more clearly realised by people as inseparable from the activities of life.

To-day in any given community you will find a larger number of people ready to examine the question of internationalism than you would have found twenty years ago. You can find larger audiences now to listen to the gospel of the beautiful in life than you were able to find a few generations ago. On the whole throughout the world these two elements are slowly increasing in power. And in those two elements we shall find, if we examine, something of the characteristics, of a new religion which is slowly coming.

Now since there are these two forces of fellowship and of beauty growing and inspiring mankind, naturally one turns to such religions as exist to encourage them. After all, for many centuries religion has been the great inspirer and purifier of human activities. We should therefore expect the great religions of the world to take up this increasing power in humanity, inspire it and to guide its forces so that the golden age of which all are dreaming might cease soon to be a mere dream. But unfortunately the most calamitous of all calamities to-day is the failure of religion in face of the great world crisis. I need not labour the point very much. Go into almost any Church and see how far what you feel, what you hear there, is going to change the world's affairs. Go into any one of our Indian temples and shrines, and you will certainly see there a power of mysticism, of the indwelling spirit in man; but it is not the power there that is swaying the affairs of the East to-day. That which is fashioning, shaping the world are the forces of economics and of politics. These are the things, however, which are utterly outside the control of modern religion. No one in any parliament will turn for

his inspiration to the Sermon on the Mount. We take for granted that religion is something now which deals with the inner spirit of man, and that men who are not leaders in religion are better fitted to organise the material and the political affairs of the world.

### **Religion and Reconstruction.**

Now, when you have such a partition between religion and the outer activities of men represented by politics and economics, you have the element and the qualities of the decay of religion, because religion is essentially reconstruction. The moment you are truly religious you must reconstruct yourself; you must reconstruct your home, your city, your nation. Religion when you feel it absolutely makes you a missionary. You are one who has God's teaching to give. You are a gospeller, and you cannot be satisfied till the reconstruction is continuous. The truly religious man must reconstruct himself from day to day, and therefore it is that wherever religion is a real force in a people, that people is steadily reconstructing itself in politics, in art, in literature, in economics. Religion influences, guides and in every way controls the life of the people.

With us in India, where we have much religion, the problem is the same. We have in our social life many an abuse. Some of the most profoundly unbrotherly elements that any civilisation could have are in our own civilisation of India. Yet somehow there is lacking in religion the power to change those unbrotherly elements, and for the most part even the most profoundly religious people are unable to see the connection between their practice of religion and their allowing the practice of unreligion and unbrotherliness by their callousness, by their blindness to the evil conditions round them. That is why I hold that this is an age when religion is decaying, for wherever any religion becomes conservative, there the spirit, the force of decay has begun. But while a religion decays another religion is being born; and you can see this phenomenon if you study history. If you think a religion is merely the pronouncement of some individual Teacher, then obviously you have

to wait for the coming of a person to show you the beginning of religion. But if, far more truly, you hold that religion is an expression of the inner life of the individual, then you can see the birth of religion long before any one particular person proclaims it as a religion. To-day you can see in men's lives the spirit of fellowship, the craving for beauty, and it is because these things can be observed that I point out to you that already a religion is being born slowly in the hearts of men. For true religion is that which comes out of the inner natures of people, is slowly born—just as with history in transition we see the darkness disappearing, because even behind the clouds of the night somewhere a sun is rising.

### **The Religion of a Nation**

represents those inner instincts of religion in the individuals of the nation. If, therefore, you can watch the spirit beginning in individuals, you can forecast something of the religion which will influence and guide that of the people. In a similar way you can see the religion to come of a great era. If you note throughout the world in the people who are going to live in that era a particular tendency of the inner life, then you can forecast the coming religion. So, then, we have the general axiom that when a religion dies a religion is being born, and if such religions as exist in the world to-day are unable to control the political and the economic conditions in the world, then there is a new religion coming of fellowship and beauty which somehow will control them as that religion grows.

I have said that the two principal characteristics will be fellowship and beauty. But how are we to realise fellowship and beauty as such powerful forces that they will be felt in our Parliaments? That is the problem. UNTIL RELIGION IS ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE WHOLE WORLD IT IS NOT A WORLD RELIGION. UNTIL A RELIGION IS ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT A NATION, IT IS NOT A NATIONAL RELIGION. UNTIL IT IS ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT A MAN, IT IS NOT HIS RELIGION, IT IS MERELY A CREED WHICH HE PROFESSES.

Now, we can never have in the great coming

religion a reality merely by theory. By no amount of reading great Utopias instructing us in great ideals can we ever bring as a force into the world of affairs and of economics the religion of fellowship and beauty. Theories are necessary and excellent to guide a certain number ; but they must put the theory into practice, and be the living theory itself.

### **The Basis of Internationalism.**

Now, how are we to have the living theory of fellowship ? Internationalism is a wonderful ideal, but you cannot prove it a success until you begin to give that necessary factor in internationalism which is, that in all nations is a common life, not a life that decays and goes into the grave, but a life which purifies and offers itself up to the great stream of life from God. Until in each individual there is seen a hidden divinity, you cannot have any gospel of fellowship as a living reality. Hence, therefore, if we are to have true internationalism, it must only be on the basis of a common recognition of a divine nature in all men, of all nations, of all civilisations—even the lowest. I have mentioned that this coming religion which you can see, is already beginning its work. But its work can only become a success by more and more people in increasing numbers realising as a fact of their own lives that in all men is one common divine nature.

Now, there is a preparation for this realisation already in the world. If you look into the history of the world's thought, especially the religious thought, you will note how slowly the idea of the divinity of man has spread. We have to-day large numbers of people who have added on to whatever they believe about God such doctrines as are proclaimed in Christian Science, in New Thought, in Theosophy, all tending to bring man to the front of the stage, not as the creature of God but as divinity revealed more and more. People are guided to a higher ethical code by the trust in their own divinity rather than by the fear of the punishment which religious sanctions impose. So, then, we see in advance of the realisation the ideas, and a few trying to live the ideas—but only a few.



### **The Power of Beauty.**

Similarly is it with regard to beauty. You can judge to-day the value of nations in the great human family largely by their love for the cultural things of life. When the spirit of a nation begins to feel the need of some creative expression through the arts, through literature, through drama, then you feel that the life in that nation is coming to maturity. You cannot judge the strength of the nation in the world by looking at blue books and seeing the size of the army or the navy, or the quantity of the imports and the exports. You can have a powerful nation which is to die within a generation or two, while the blue books will give you an utterly false picture of its own strength. On the other hand you may have a nation which has little to record of those material developments, and yet has the inhering qualities of permanence. Now the quality of permanence comes into a nation where the inner soul of the nation, its spirit, is continually creating in all those ways of the higher mind and emotions which we call Art.

Now, slowly, as the result of the work of a certain number of writers like Ruskin and Carlyle, of poets such as Blake, of musicians who proclaim a gospel of art like Wagner, of certain painters such as the Pre-Raphaelite School, who proclaimed an inner quality in the beauty of painting, thoughtful men and women are beginning to realise that beauty is not an excrescence, a luxury in life, but rather an inseparable essence.

I ought to mention here, too, how steadily the great educational profession, especially in America, is beginning to find out the power of beauty as an influence in character building. In brief, we find that men have to realise, both the divinity in themselves and the beauty inseparable from life if in any way the great religion of the future is going to be more than a mere profession by a few.

Now, all these ideas about internationalism, about the gospel of art, are for the most part outside the Churches; throughout all the countries the dreamers are not to be found in the Churches. These dreamers have organised societies, associations, conferences, they are doing all kinds of things, but

for the most part there is a gap between their activities and the activities of the organised established Churches. Now, that very fact itself is the sign of

### **The Coming Religion.**

Let me take you back to ancient days of Greece and Rome before Christ appeared. When Christianity was preached it was only professed by scarcely a thousand or two perhaps in Palestine, and none would have forecasted that the religion in that small land was going to be the gospel of a great continent. But while in Greece and Rome there were established religions, those faiths were honey-combed on their outer fringes by all kinds of associations and cults. The religion of Greece and Rome had nothing for the foreigner, for the slave ; but since there were thousands of those, we find coming into the Roman religion, into the Greek religion, cult after cult. On the fringe of the orthodox religion, men were grouping themselves into new formations. You could not have forecasted then that all these new formations, these small communities would coalesce within a few generations and come under the domination of a religion which sprang from Palestine. You certainly would not have forecasted the decay of the mighty religion of Rome with all its established priests and the power of the State behind it. But that did happen, and we find these small bodies becoming more amenable to the influence of the young religion, the old religion slowly receding into the background, and the new religion influencing these unorthodox communities, and gradually coalescing them into the believers of the new faith.

In exactly the same way we have outside the fringes of the great religions, groups of idealists joining this association and that association, fretful of the claims imposed upon them by the orthodox faiths. And then we see slowly dawning, something akin to a world cult, that of fellowship and of beauty. Surely, then, it is not such an extreme conclusion that presently this new force of religion will slowly displace the old religions ?

I ought here to make myself clear because that statement may give rise to a false aspect. I do not

myself see the disappearance actually of the great religions, but rather the bringing of all of them under the fold of the new religion. What will happen is that the spirit of fellowship and of beauty will so predominate that every religion will become influenced by them, and necessarily in each country the religion will begin to emphasise the ideals of fellowship and of beauty, and will begin slowly to let go of all the credal elements; and presently we may see the Buddhist with his dagoba, or the Christian with his church, or the Muhammadan with his mosque and the Hindu with his temple, yet throughout all of them we shall have the recognition of a greater religion than Christianity or Hinduism or Buddhism—and that is this

### **Universal Religion of Fellowship and of Beauty.**

In that way we shall have all the old religions transformed, and it may be in the course of a few centuries after the transformation is complete one would hardly be able to see the difference between Christianity and Hinduism, and Hinduism and Muhammadanism.

Now, if all these things are to happen, if this religion of the future is to become a reality, one thing is necessary, a Personality. I have pointed out that there is an age coming, but the age does not come to its fruition, as it were, or rather to the beginning of its fruition until some Personality appears, and crystallises and illumines it, stamping Himself upon the age. That is the way that humanity progresses; that is the way that you can see in history mankind has gone on. Take for instance, that which we have to-day accepted in thinking, and that is the right of each man to think according to his own judgment.

### **Free Thought.**

More or less that which we call free thought is accepted in every democracy, but that spirit of free thinking which to us is inseparable from democratic institutions was stamped on Europe by one person, Giordano Bruno. It was Bruno who dared to oppose his individual thinking against the thought dictated to the world by a Hierarchy;

and he was burnt at the stake for the great stand he took for the right of man to think according to his own inborn divinity. But he crystallised the age, he inspired all the thinkers of Europe after him, and from that day free thought is the birth-right of man, and is believed in by all of us.

### Science.

It is exactly the same with regard to the great age of Science to which we owe so much to-day. But it was one man who stood, as it were, as the baptiser at the cradle of the new-born infant of science, and that was Francis Bacon. With his personality, with his writings, he created an enthusiasm in the mind of his age for this gospel of the future. For then science was hardly to be separated from superstition; yet Francis Bacon with his intellect, with his personality, inspired his scientific comrades throughout Europe, and gave an impetus which made possible the scientific era.

Go back to India six centuries before Christ. The great spirit of compassion which modified all kinds of harsh institutions at the time, the great spirit of which men were dreaming was embodied for them in the personality of the BUDDHA. Come to Palestine and you will find there a certain number of Jews dreaming of a future when the message which they had could be taken outside the boundaries of their own little nation, when once more the God of Righteousness could be worshipped not only by a handful but by millions. That spirit of being tired of all the old religious oligarchies became crystallised in the personality of Christ, and He ushers in the new age which has been prepared for Him by the dreamers. The dreamers precede the Personality, but the Personality impresses Himself upon the age, and by his dramatic life he seems as it were to live in symbol something of the future of the age which he comes to proclaim.

It was the spirit of sacrifice of the Christ, His death at the hands of the people, which told every idealist something of both the tragedy and the glory of the spiritual life; and in all those ways it is a Person who is necessary in order that the



dawning age may be stamped with a quality or reality.

### **The Supreme Personality.**

If there is to be a new religion, and if there is also to be a personality to crystallise, to illumine the coming age, and if the religion, as I hold, will have the two elements of fellowship and beauty as its characteristics, who is the Person, that must come, of what nature will this Person be? That is obvious. He must have within Him all that we can think of as the supreme elements of fellowship. I mentioned that fellowship can only be a living fact because the divinity within oneself and others is realised. Our great Personality must then be Himself as the great Eternal Light. He must be One Who stands enfolding within Himself in some glorious fashion all the possibilities of divine realisation in all men. He must see all men as equal to Him, because in them is that which He has realised for Himself. It is only because He lives in them that He can be Their Leader. If, then, this great religion to come is to be for the whole world our great supreme Personality must be one that is able to live in all men, to dream all their dreams, to sympathise with all their tragedies, and, because He lives in them all, to accept all with all their faiths and creeds where they stand.

And also if He is to be the Supreme Teacher of the new religion, in some way He must satisfy our craving for the beautiful. In some way He must make more real to ourselves this instinct which is now being born in us, that henceforth in our lives and institutions beauty should be an essence. That can only be by the power which He has to awaken the intuition in us. You do not make a person to understand beauty by lecturing to him. You can tell a child how to feel beauty by presenting him with a flower; but you must present it in such a way, with such grace, with such inward understanding of the flower, that the child's intuition is awakened, and he sees the flower in a new way.

It must be by the directness of the intuition of the supreme Personality that we shall be inspired

to feel the power of beauty in life. Hence, therefore, He must be One who has an indescribable quality of grace in His intellect and in His emotions. He need not be an artist, a painter, a musician, so long as He is the essence of them all in that divine synthetic faculty of the intuition which reflects divine ideas by His feeling, by His intellect. The way that most of us come to beauty is very largely by sympathy, by the sense of compassion which we feel coming from the message of the musician or the painter; and when we can be guided to link ourselves with the creative object, then the spirit of beauty begins to be understood by us. That is why you can have a person who is not a creative artist in the form of the arts that we know to-day, and yet be the great inspirer of a whole art era.

Now, does such a Person exist? That is the question to which there is an answer in every religion. In your own religion you are taught that the Christ exists and will come again. In Hinduism the teaching is perfectly clear also. There the Teacher is called Shri Krishna, Who proclaimed when last He was on earth that "when righteousness decays and evil prevails in the world, then I come but to give righteousness."

In Buddhism the idea is perfectly clear. He Who is to come is called the Bodhisattva, the Lord of Compassion. In Muhammadanism He is called the Imam Mahdi—Imam, the mysterious link between man and God. In Zoroastrianism He Who is to come is called Saoshyant the Saviour. Here are, then, statements in the great religions as to Someone Who is to come some day. Now, is it so extraordinary to imagine that that some day is drawing near? That since we have the dawn already in fellowship and in beauty of a new religion, since already we have on the outer fringes of the great religions these heterodox organisations, is it so much of a presumption that this great Teacher is to come soon?

### **The Great Teacher.**

Those of us who have pledged ourselves to the inner light and to the inner life, believe that all

these Personalities referred to in the great religions as Christ, as the Bodhisattva, as Shri Krishna as the Imam Mahdi are really one Person; and we hold, then, that He will come. The question is often asked: "But why does not He come at once? You say that the world is needing His coming? Why should He not come immediately?" Because before His coming He desires to have a large body of helpers. He is not coming by miracles to convince humanity that God dwells in them; He is going to make men realise it by organising life for them in a new way, and He is not going to organise a little country like Palestine, but He is going to organise all the nations of the earth. In Palestine according to tradition at least there was only one John the Baptist, who strove to make straight the pathway of the Lord. But the pathway of the Lord then was Palestine; the pathway of the Lord now is all the countries of the world. And so thousands of John the Baptists are required to prepare His way, and it is until those thousands are ready that He waits to come.

The world longs for a Teacher; the Teacher, according to at least this theory is preparing to come—somewhere He is preparing. What then is the logical conclusion from all this? The conclusions are two. First when He comes to accept Him. But you would say surely we shall accept Him. I do not think there is anything sure about it. It is the immemorial fate of great Teachers that when They come it is not Their generation which accepts Them, but other generations which come after Them. There is such excessive light in that which They say and do, and the phenomenon which is seen when the light shines forth in its fullness is that the darkness comprehends it not. Such is the nature of many people that they behave as does the pupil of the human eye. The more light you throw on it, the more it contracts, and you need only to look at the public press of the world to see how any great Teacher Who proclaimed internationalism in its fullness, or the gospel of beauty in its splendour would be looked at to-day. Jeers and calumny and the comic cartoon, these are the stones with which we will stone Him in these days. And so if we are to accept Him,

it is only by our preparing ourselves to accept Him.

### **The Preparation.**

And the preparation can only be by training ourselves first and foremost in fellowship, in eliminating from our minds that warp which nationality gives, which religion gives, which sex gives, which class interest gives; and when all these things are eliminated one by one and we can see a man, and a woman, not as man or woman, but as the embodiment of a divine nature, then we shall know what real fellowship is. And though to live that ideal is far off, at any rate we can try to live it. And in so far only as we try to live it now before the great Teacher comes shall we recognise the great Teacher. He may come in the East, the West, the North, the South, and who shall tell us who He is? Someone getting up on some platform and telling us this is He, will not prove that fact to us. Each one of us must prove that He is the Great Teacher for himself. No kind of second-hand evidence, even of someone in whom you have full trust, will give you that utter certainty that He is the Great Teacher Who is to usher in the great age. On this matter you tread the Path one by one, and not two by two; and so if you are to recognise Him it can only be by your reflecting in your nature now something of His nature through fellowship.

That is one way. Another way by which, too, you can prepare yourselves is by developing that other element in your nature which I have called beauty. If a man will train himself in simplicity, in living the things of grace and of beauty—which need not be complex—if right through his life he will eliminate all those non-essentials which complicate thinking and feeling and try to live, finding the simple things of life as having more of a message of God to him, than the complicated things which civilisation has created, then his nature will be prepared to accept the great Teacher when He comes.

### **The Dream.**

One part, then, of the conclusion is to be prepared to accept Him when He comes, but there is also a



second conclusion, and that is to be prepared to help Him before He comes in order to prepare His way. But if you are to help Him before He comes, you must even now make some kind of link with Him, be enrolled as His instrument as His disciple, but for that a mighty faith is required. How shall you mould your life on great ideals of fellowship and beauty? How shall you sacrifice these things unless you have some kind of a certainty? Is it after all a mere dream that a great Teacher exists, and is going to come to the world? Perhaps, who knows? You have to find it out for yourself, and my having found out that it is not a dream will not be any proof whatsoever to you. I can only point out to you that it is the most splendid dream that just now you could think out in the world of dreaming—of a regeneration of humanity—to dream of a golden age which can come when wars shall cease, when there shall be the sense of divinity in men, when the gospel of beauty shall irradiate all the peoples—surely there could not be for any noble man or woman a mightier dream to dream than that. But perhaps it is after all a dream. You know all life is dreams—dreams that fade, and dreams that are coming to birth. If you will look into your life which you have lived now, you will find that all the time you have been dreaming on from one dream to another. Only one dream which you live to-day is really full of splendour and vitality because it has connections with actualities, because you can build bridges from your dreaming to the outer world of beauty. Contemplate this other dream of a great Teacher Whom you do not see, of communicating with Him through your aspirations, of taking His guidance which comes not to your ear or to your eye, but mysteriously into your inner heart. It is a wonderful dream. Now test that dream and see whether it makes you more four-square to the world than any other dream. That is the true test. Do you feel your feet more firmly planted on earth because somehow your stature has grown and your head seems to be in a higher range of clouds? Then while your head may be in the clouds, it is for the sake of earth. If you feel that your heart grows greater in charity

if there is a clearer illumination of the drift of the world's ways, if slowly but surely you find yourself the centre of a little world in which you are yourself a little World Teacher, if men begin to look to you for comfort and for guidance, then surely a dream which makes you that, is worth all the renunciation of other dreams.

### **A Mighty Reconstructor.**

That is all I can tell you. There is a splendid dream in the world to-day, one full not only of beauty and splendour, but full of a mighty power to transform for each one of us his life, and to give us the power to shape the lives of others also. And this dream is behind the chaos of earth. There is a mighty Reconstructor Who behind all the follies of men is shaping out of their disasters a magnificent heritage which they shall enjoy. I can only say, try to find what the dream is about, contemplate it and perchance try to live the dream, and then prove for yourselves that He in Whom we believe is after all not only a dream, but the mightiest of realities which the world contains.

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